

REPORT ON TOWN OF FAIRFAX MUNICIPAL PLAN UPDATE

Over the past year, the Fairfax Planning Commission has been working to complete an amendment to the “Town of Fairfax, Vermont Municipal Plan.” This effort is part of a continuing planning process that guides the Town’s decisions for future growth. The planning process conforms to the State’s four planning goals of Chapter 117, Section 4302, which strive for a comprehensive planning process that includes *citizen participation*, the *consideration for the consequences of growth*, and *compatibility with surrounding municipalities and encouragement of municipalities to work creatively together to develop and implement plans*.

The current Town of Fairfax, Vermont Municipal Plan expires on September 3, 2018. The proposed municipal plan amendment provides an update to the 2013 plan and incorporates an enhanced energy plan enabled per 24 V.S.A. §4352. The enhanced energy plan consists of a new Energy Chapter (Section 6, Appendix 1), updated energy-related goals and policies (Section 6, Appendix 1), and new energy-related implementation actions (Section 2, Appendix 1).

The plan update does alter the designation of land area in Fairfax by including maps that are required to be included in the enhanced energy plan. These maps, and language associated with the maps, will help the Town, developers, and the Vermont Public Utility Commission understand where future renewable energy facilities may or may not be sited in the community. The solar and wind maps in the Energy Plan (Appendix 1), in particular, alter the designation of land. These maps designate three areas: “Prime” areas where there is potential for solar or wind electricity generation, but do not contain any known “constraints” that may restrict the development of a future renewable energy facility. “Base” areas have also been identified. “Base” areas may have potential for future renewable energy generation, but may contain a “secondary constraint,” a natural resource worthy of protection that could limit future development of renewable energy facilities. Lastly, the remaining areas either do not contain any resource potential and/or encompass a “known” constraint, an area that likely contains a natural resource and that shall be protected from all future development of renewable energy facilities.

Since the energy maps affect the entire Town, it is not possible to definitively determine the effect of the proposed change in the designation of land on a specific “surrounding area.” The proposed change in the designation of land will not increase traffic. The proposed change in the designation of land will have positive long-term benefits to the municipality based on the creation of additional municipal tax base and little to no need for additional public facilities. The amount of land which is subject to the change in the designation of land includes the entire municipality since the maps created are based on a data and methodology that includes the whole town. This is regardless of whether or not the land is currently considered vacant (or not vacant). The suitability of the areas that have been designated is based on the methodology explained in the preceding paragraph which takes into consideration appropriate alternative locations, alternative uses for the area under consideration, and the probable impact of the

proposed change on other areas similarly designated. The proposed size and boundaries of the areas designated as “prime” or “base” are appropriate with respect to the proposed use of such areas, the land capability of these areas, which is based on the best available data regarding solar and wind generated electricity potential and location of natural resource “constraints,” and the existing development in the area.

The Fairfax Town Plan includes eight (8) sections and one (1) appendix: Section 1. Purpose; Section 2. Implementation; Section 3. Community Profile; Section 4. Local Economy; Section 5. Community Facilities, Utilities and Services; Section 6. Infrastructure: Housing, Transportation, and Energy; Section 7. Land Resources and the Built Environment; Section 8. Compatibility with the Region and Adjacent Communities; Appendix 1. Fairfax Enhanced Energy Plan. These chapters are consistent with the 14 goals established in Chapter 117, Section 4302. These goals aim to: maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village centers separated by rural countryside; provide a strong and diverse economy with rewarding job opportunities; broaden access to educational and vocational training opportunities for people of all ages; provide for safe, convenient, economic, and energy efficient transportation systems; to identify, protect, and preserve important natural and historic resources; to maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, and land resources; to encourage the efficient use of energy and development of renewable energy resources; to maintain and enhance recreational opportunities; to encourage and strengthen agricultural and forest industries; to provide for the wise and efficient use of natural resources; to ensure the availability of safe and affordable housing; to plan for, finance, and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services; and to ensure the availability of safe and affordable childcare. The chapters also contain all 12 required elements for a municipal plan established in Title 24, Chapter 11, Section 4382.

The Town of Fairfax’s Development Regulations are based on the information compiled and the goals expressed within the Municipal Plan. Fairfax Planning Commission members have spent many hours discussing and compiling this document and would sincerely like to receive your feedback. A Planning Commission public hearing will be held at the time and place stated in the accompanying Notice of Public Hearing.